



CUMBERLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

P O Box 82

4A Blanchard Road

Cumberland, ME 04021

President:	Carolyn Small
Vice Presidents:	Diana Copp
	Annemarie Dawson
Secretary:	Pat Larrabee
Treasurer:	Alberta Haynes
Trustees:	G Morgan Knight
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	Katrina Rich
	Brian Jensen
	Sue Wall
Advisor:	Barbara Garsoe

MISSION STATEMENT:

The purpose of the Society shall be to collect and preserve artifacts pertaining to the Town of Cumberland and its history, making it available to groups, schools, and individuals.

## NOVEMBER 2011 VOLUME 83

### NOVEMBER THOUGHTS:

**T**hanks for time to be together, turkey, talk, and tangy weather.  
**H** for harvest stored away, home, and hearth, and holiday.  
**A** for autumn's frosty art, and abundance in the heart.  
**N** for neighbors, and November, nice things, new things to remember.  
**K** for kitchen, kettles' croon, kith and kin expected soon.  
**S** for sizzles, sights, and sounds, and something special that about.  
That spells THANKS for joy in living and a jolly good Thanksgiving.  
- Aileen Fisher, *All in a Word*

### OCTOBER MEETING:

Our guest speaker, Christel Fioregave an in-depth first-person account about the pressures of a German child living in Nazi Germany. It presented a different perspective to all of us about what went on from that point of view. She sold some of her books, and we have one now in our collection.

A big thank you goes to Sweetser's Apple Barrel for the donation, once again, of their delicious apple cider for the October meeting.

### NEW MEMBERS:

Joan Fryer who joined at the October meeting.

Jeff Smith, by way of a birthday gift from his wife. Happy Birthday, Jeff!

Welcome to both new members.

### SECOND GRADE HISTORIC WALKS:

The walks with the second grades at Mabel I. Wilson School are finished up for this year. The nine classes walked and asked questions: one was, "What were the names of the boys in the agriculture class who planted the trees on Greely's front lawn?" That research is still ongoing. The teacher who initiated the planting has been found. His name was Charles Chamberlain, and was a Bowdoin graduate. The names of the students have yet to be found. The brochure listing all the students who attended Greely Institute in 1871 has been located, but the individual classes are not broken down to list the students in each class. That may take a lot more digging. Some years after 1871, the brochures advertising Greely Institute did list the students and the classes that they were taking. Some even posted the students' position in the class standings!

Another youth group that met at the Historical Society was the Girl Scout Troop lead by Michelle Josephson. These fifth grade age girls made it an easy "lesson" to give because they spent the entire hour and a half asking questions about the items in the building and about historical things that were of

interest to them. Their enthusiasm for the whole procedure was very encouraging. It was a really great Wednesday afternoon.

#### ACQUISITIONS:

From Joanne Osgood Best : a picture of the 1951 girl graduates at Greely Institute, and a commencement brochure to go along with it. She also included a newsletter from The Greer (South Carolina) Ministries, naming her and her husband Burt in the Volunteer Spotlight as hard workers every day at the Food Pantry. Joanne is also on the Board of Directors. Sounds like their good Maine work ethics are showing up down south!

From Dick and Connie Sweetser: 4 vintage photos and a Christmas card picturing the front door of the Sweetser homestead with that lovely fanlight over the top. Perhaps we should be thinking of doing posters of the interesting old front doors in town, and selling them. Anybody want to take that job and run with it?

From ebay: With the donations sent to us in memory of Everett Strout, we have purchased two interesting items about the Merrill Brothers corn factories. One is a Maine Central Railroad work order for corn from the Merrill Brothers factory in Jay, and the other is a letter sent to them from a customer in Philadelphia. Three other items that were bid on got outbid at the last minute, so were lost.

#### OCTOBER STUMPER:

What was the original name of the Gyger Gym going to be?

ANSWER: Cumberland Gymnasium. The name was changed to Gyger Gym in honor of Superintendent of Schools, John Thomas Gyger, who died suddenly of a heart attack one week before the building was dedicated. The building was a WPA project headed up by Ernest Rand.

#### NOVEMBER STUMPER:

What is a hornbook?

This following article appears every year on the Internet at Halloween in regards to haunted places in Maine. Nobody who lived in the area at this time can figure out what this is all about. If anyone can enlighten us, it would be appreciated.

**Cumberland - Greely High School - in the early 1950's, 5 boys were tragically murdered here. Their cries can be heard at night, lights turning on and off , and shadows and sounds of people walking down the halls. Their killer was never caught. A night janitor quit and refused to enter the building (even with police) after he claimed that he was mopping a hallway and after the air around him turned ice cold the lights went out, they came back on a moment later and what appeared to be blood covered the floor in front of him. He swore that he looked to his left and blood was coming out of a locker. The locker was said to be that of**

one of the murdered students. In another incident there in 1987 disruption in a classroom there included chalk flying, hands on the clock spinning, and a table moving across the floor.

#### NOVEMBER MEETING:

We will need a few extra plates of goodies, because Don's talks always bring in a lot of people. And in regards to that, **we will be meeting at the Prince Memorial Library instead of the Historical Society**. We can only legally hold 40 people, and from the reports of the other places where he has spoken, there will be more than that. There are still quite a few old barns in Cumberland, but so many have either burned, or have fallen in. Barns are a high maintenance item, and are expensive to keep, unfortunately.

The following is an article that our guest speaker submitted in the October 19 Portland Press Herald.

October 19

## Lakes Region: Barn design offers clues to Maine history

By DON PERKINS

There's more to pre-Civil War barns than meets the eye. These hand-hewn frames are unlike any buildings made today. Local barns will be the focus of my forthcoming book, due out next fall.



[click image to enlarge](#)

This Harrison barn, above, features several early barn indicators, including an offset door and shallow roof pitch.

Photos by Don Perkins



[click image to enlarge](#)

A New Gloucester barn also has an offset door, which maximized space. Hay was stored on the wider side.

### **ADDITIONAL PHOTOS BELOW**

Select images available for purchase in the  
Maine Today Photo Store

### **WINDHAM HISTORY INSIDE**

The interior of this circa-1800 barn in Windham sports an "English tying joint," the section of the frame where post top, crosstie and rafter intersect. English settlers brought this Old World design with them to New England.

The joint dates to the medieval period (13th century) and "ties" the frame together in a very effective manner. It needs no hardware and is fashioned simply with wooden pegs.

To provide enough wood for the intersecting joinery, wall posts in these early barns flare ever wider toward the top. As such, a builder would invert a tree: The wider butt-end would naturally become the post's top. The English tying joint was standard practice for more than 500 years of barn building.

### **EARLY HARRISON GEM**

Believed to be the one of the oldest barns in Harrison, this circa-1812 specimen belongs to the Harrison Historical Society and sports an offset door and shallow roof pitch -- classic early barn indicators.

Nails were at a premium in the old days, and this barn was never shingled or clapboarded. In fact, saving on nails was once so necessary builders cut a slot into the underside of the top exterior wall beams into which a barn's vertical boarding could be fit, thus saving nails at the uppermost section of each board.

### **ADDITIONS IN SEBAGO**

As family farms grew in the 19th century, expanding barns was a common practice. Over the years, this circa-1840s barn in the town of Sebago expanded in different ways. The original barn was lengthened, nearly doubling its footprint, before receiving several lean-to-like additions around its perimeter.

## OFF CENTER IN NEW GLOUCESTER

This 1849 barn in New Gloucester has an offset door, a tell-tale pre-Civil War indicator. The offset was done to maximize space: Animals were stabled on the narrower side, which was invariably oriented to receive the day's sun, helping cooped-up animals during a long Maine winter.

Conversely, hay was stored on the wider opposing side, which received little sun in summer. Hay, especially loose hay, needed to be kept cool in summertime as it was prone to spontaneous combustion. Many barns burned from these spontaneous hay fires.

For more on Maine's barns, visit [www.ourbarns.com](http://www.ourbarns.com).

*Don Perkins is a freelance writer who lives in Raymond. He can be reached at: [presswriter@gmail.com](mailto:presswriter@gmail.com)*

Don't forget that dues are due. \$10.00 per person for the year. This month's newsletter will run the last reminder for this year. Some newsletters will be sent by email. If you prefer to have it mailed USPS, please notify Carolyn Small at 829-4423.

Mail to: Cumberland Historical Society

P O Box 82

Cumberland, ME 04021

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Winter address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Winter time of departure: \_\_\_\_\_

All programs start at 7:00 PM unless otherwise noted.

NOVEMBER 2011 ~ barns, presented by Don Perkins

No program in December

